# Depot Town Rag

Volume 22, Number 10

December 2010

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198


**HOMETOWN SECURITY: Run to "the fortress" if A2 should ever attack**

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

## In Ypsilanti, "The Big House" is neither a prison nor a football field; it's a *big house*

*Depot Towners climb the hill to the Hutchinson House once each year to leave baskets of bread or apples and jugs of locally produced beer. The traditional tribute gives rise to the hope forshelter within its walls in case of attack from Arborlanders.*

## 600 North River Street: The Hutchinson House

*-from the High/Scope brochure*

The Hutchinson House was built at the turn of the twentieth century by Shelly Byron Hutchinson, founder of the S&H Green Stamp business. The mansion is an elaborate reflection of the Queen Anne style of architecture combined with the richer Romanesque style, resulting in a picturesque blend of towers, curves, lines, shapes, and materials.

Hutchinson chose materials from throughout the world for his 33-room, single-family dwelling. He included many unique features, such as an indoor pool (now capped), a two-story ballroom with an orchestra loft, one of the country's earliest elevators, and a dining room that is a replica of that found in Kaiser Wilhelm's mansion in Germany. Ornately carved woods of several varieties decorate mantels, beams, columns, wainscoting, and window and door frames. Plaster rosettes and moldings beautify the ceilings of several of the mansion's rooms.

Elegant brass hardware adorns the doors. Brass fixtures and original basins, tubs, and light fixtures are present in bathrooms. Imported ceramic tiles are found in the kitchen, a serving room, and three bathrooms. All of the flooring, except on the lowest level, is hardwood.

The grounds surrounding the mansion are landscaped with an unusual variety of trees, including ginkgo, camperdown, oak, and beech.

Over the years, the Hutchinson House has had many owners, and at one point it was converted into 14 apartments. Fortunately, the remodeling was done carefully and did not destroy the mansion's basic architectural design. In 1975, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation moved its headquarters into the Hutchinson House. Since then, the mansion has been restored as much as possible to preserve this landmark for the future and still meet the Foundation's needs for usable office space.

## Depot Towners didn't all live in apartments above their stores

In recent years, any real estate listing within fifteen miles of Ypsi's depot has been described in lurid advertisements as "within walking distance of Depot Town," as if that's some kind of big deal. The original Depot Town Development Authority's map of the district showed only six detached houses within our legal environs, but that monster house on North River Street is just half a block away from the old MCRR depot, so we're calling it "in Depot Town" for our purposes in this issue of *The Rag*!

## Biggest house in town was paid for with trading stamps Entreprenurial spirit lives

Save that "coffee card" from Café Luwak. That's exactly how Shelly Hutchinson made enough money to build the biggest house in town. He had the idea for trading stamps and his partnership with Sperry made them a fortune.

## Train-watchers' update

On November 10 the Michigan House of Representatives passed HB 6484 (67 voting yes, 31 voting nay) which would provide up to $100 million in bond proceeds dedicated to rail projects in Michigan. The state Senate must pass this bill when they return in December. Please contact your state Senator and urge them to vote for HB 6484. Our senator can be reached at SenLBrater@senate.michigan.gov

This will provide the necessary matching funds for the recently announced $150 million High Speed Rail grant as well as additional funds that could be used for infrastructure for the Detroit-Ypsilanti-AA commuter rail.

# Shelly Byron Hutchinson:
## The early years and the later years *-James Mann*

Shelly Byron Hutchinson began life at the bottom the social ladder, born in a log cabin, climbed to the top to build his own thirty-room mansion, and in the end lived out his last days in a hotel room.

The story of his family was the story of pioneer life. His grandparents were James and Elizabeth Cronkite Hutchinson both of whom were born in New York State in 1797. They were married on December 27, 1818, Elizabeth's birthday. Early in the marriage they had decided to move west to take advantage of the cheap land in the Michigan Territory, but did not arrive until June of 1835. At first James Hutchinson and his sons, Daniel, Henry and James Jr. worked as teamsters. Soon after their arrival they purchased a farm in Superior Township just north of Ypsilanti. On this farm their last three sons were born: Stephen, Byron and Andrew.

Stephen, the oldest son born in Michigan, married Loretta Jacox, and settled on a farm in Superior Township three miles north of Ypsilanti, living in a log cabin. It was in this log cabin on October 19, 1864 that Shelly Bryon Hutchinson was born. The family moved to Ypsilanti soon after and settled into a house on River Street. Stephen became the town constable.

The young Shelly Bryon Hutchinson started out as a dancing master and seems to have enjoyed some success as such. He was well known for his ability and even made a tour of the west. Yet it was while working as a clerk in a store at Battle Creek that he first developed his ideas for a trading stamp business.

With that great business success, Hutchinson moved back to Ypsilanti, built his big house, then lost it.

Once he lost his home, business and money, Hutchinson moved to New York, taking up residence at the Prince George Hotel, 14 East 28th Street. Little is known of how he spent the next 40 years, although something was said of him selling real estate.

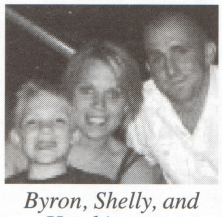
He visited Ypsilanti at the age of 91, in 1955. Then he talked of "planning a new advertising venture along bigger lines," but nothing seems to have come of it. He died at his home at 54 Whittier Parkway in Baltimore, Maryland in July of 1961. He is buried in the family plot in Highland Cemetery, just north of his house on the hill.

## Expert opinion:

How to accurately tell the story of the Biggest House in Town? Few things are worse than getting your subject's name wrong. "Shelley" or "Shelly"? After noting disagreement even in news stories published in Hutchinson's day, the editors asked the folks at High/Scope. Virtually all of their promotions of the famous house list the original owner as "Shelly."

## Where's Shelly Hutchinson today?

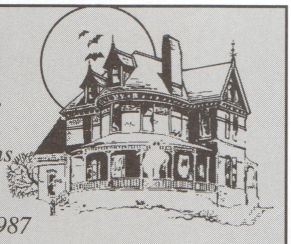
Seven Shelly Hutchinsons have their photos posted on the popular Facebook.com social media site, but it is doubtful any of these cuties were named for Ypsi's famed Shelly Byron Hutchinson. Most of the namesakes at right use the "e" version of their first name, none has "Byron" for a middle name, and many of them could be female. At bottom left of this collection, it appears they could be (left to right) Byron, Shelley, and Hutchinson. Could be, but probably not.



*Byron, Shelly, and Hutchinson—inheritors of the S&H Green Stamp fortune?*

## Rent the movie to *research* the romantic name Shelley (with an '...ey'), Byron and Friends in "Gothic"

*By Vincent Canby Published: April 10, 1987*



*Big, old houses often set the stage for scandals of Gothic proportions*

During the summer of 1816, while he was in residence in a villa on the Swiss shore of Lake Geneva, Lord Byron, then 28, was host to his fellow poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, 24; Mary Godwin, Shelley's 19-year-old mistress, whom he later married; Mary's stepsister, Claire Clairmont, 18, who was pregnant with Byron's child, and John William Polidori, Byron's doctor and friend, who was 21....

The director Ken Russell, the apostle who preaches that too much is never enough, has taken this footnote to literary history and boiled it down to one frenzied night of sadomasochistic seductions, seances, fights, drug-taking, hallucinations and spectacular special effects.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# Our famous neighbor was always a newsworthy item

*[August 21, 1909, The Ypsilanti Sentinel-Commercial, compliments of S.B. Hutchinson's great grand newphew, Rodney Hutchinson]*

## Franchise Had First Reading Monday Evening

**Labor Organization Demands That New Company Employ Union Labor Proceeding of the Council**

Shelly Hutchinson's asked-for telephone franchise was given its first reading Monday evening and after the following change was laid over for the second reading at the next meeting. The clause to the effect that the rate shall be $26 and $20 unless three-year contracts are signed, was cut out; the toll rate after the first 2 1/2 minutes was cut from 10 to 5 cents per minute; the extra charge for full copper metallic circuit—the so-called "long distance" phones—was cut from $1 to 50 cents per month extra; the number of free phones furnished the city raised from 14 to 24.

Other important sections of the franchise are: no poles to be erected on the following streets— Huron street, from Catherine to Cross street; Washington street, from Michigan to Cross street; Adams street, from Congress to Cross street; Congress street, from Washington to Ballard street; Pearl street, from Huron to Adams street; Ellis street, from Huron to Adams street; Emmet street, from Huron to Adams; Cross street, from Prospect to Adams street; River street from Congress to Forest avenue; Maple street, from Prospect to River street; Oak street, from Prospect avenue to River street.

## Hutchinson Renews Litigation for Trading-Stamp Profits

[*The New York Times*, July 22, 1921]

TRENTON, N.J. Charging that at least $5,000,000 had been diverted in secret dividends and charging conspiracy and fraud, Shelly B. Hutchinson of Ypsilanti, Mich., today renewed in the United States District Court litigation which continued for three years between the present complainant and the stockholders of the Sperry & Hutchinson Company well known trading stamp concern.

It was alleged by Hutchinson that he originated the trading stamp and received his interest in the partnership certain shares of stock in 1900. The late Thomas A. Sperry of Cranford, and Hutchinson, were the partners. Hutchinson alleges that Sperry defrauded him out of part of his shares and that these, with a number bought by William M. Sperry, brother of Thomas A. Sperry, gave the latter control...

...Hutchinson's prior suit through the courts, even to the United States Supreme Court, and his ultimate defeat, were recited in the bill. It was asserted that there was no previous adjudication such as would prevent the success of the present suit, which, among others, joined as defendants, the New Jersey Commissioner of Banking and Insurance, the secretary of State as the Registrar of the Prorogative Court of New Jersey and the New Jersey Chancellor because of the statutes of the State. The bill also recited that Hutchinson was about to file suit in the Federal Court for a partnership accounting.

## ...and in the neighborhood gossips' hot-line express

Jan Anscheutz's excellent article ("River Street Neighbor's Gossip and the Hutchinson Marriage") in the Fall 2010 issue of *Gleanings* told it all: Why the family split up, where the wife and kids stayed, how the in-laws behaved. Juicy stuff. See page six for the Ypsilanti Historical Society's web site. It's all on line!

[*www.ypsilantihistoricalsociety.org*]

## Hutchinson House facts & figures

**1901** - Year of construction
**33** rooms
**10,000** square feet
**3** maintenance preservationists on staff
**14** apartments subdivided while known as "Case Loma"
**1975** -Year High/Scope bought the property
**6** times on the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation annual home tour
**???** How many work there? Dangerous question. When we asked the Pope about the Vatican, he said, "About half"!

**16** *seats around the dining room conference table in its current configuration*

## Trading stamp concept still popular

They sure started something. Sperry & Hutchinson's Green Stamps were followed by many other similar schemes:

- Piggly Wiggly's Greenbax
- Kroger's Top Value Stamps
- A&P's Plaid Stamps,and stamps of every color of the rainbow including
- K&S Red
- Merchant Green
- Mor-Valu
- King Korn
- Big Bonus
- Buckeye
- Buccaneer
- Two Guys
- Eagle
- Gift House
- Double M
- Frontier
- Quality
- Big W
- Triple-S Blue
- World Green
- Shur-Valu
- Regal
- Double Thrift

...and more

*Start your stamp collection today to build your dream house once the economy improves*

Walter Beinecke, great-grandson of co-founder Thomas Sperry, finally bought the S&H company back and now has a digital version of S&H Green Stamps known as "Greenpoints."

## Progress at Ypsilanti's historic Freighthouse!

*New west platform completed in October 2010*

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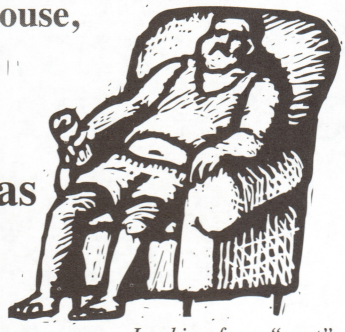
## With neighbors like the Hutchinson House, Ypsi folks can afford to be snobs

**Classy Home Decor Dept:**

# *Recherché* Romance: No quaintness, no flaming sofas



*Looking for a "seat" on A² City Council*

*"I don't want no recherché romance,*
*No, no, not me!*
*If you want a recherché romance,*
*I'm gonna set you free!"*
*[Recherché = French; exotic, elegant, snobbish]*

Teresa Brewer, sage philosopher of the 1950s, said it correctly when she said she didn't want a (ricochet) romance.

Neither does Ypsi's Depot Town. There are no "Ye Oldies" here, nor can quaintness be found in these old railroad workers' buildings. Shops and taverns do not fake-up their antiquity with names from counties in England. Neither do we find evidence of High Victoriana here. Even the fabled Hutchinson House seemed to have a sense of humor about the architectural elements it borrowed from history. Phony Colony does not succeed in the mid-west any more than it did on the east coast. We are not colonists; we're pioneers. And farmers, and hunters, and railroad workers.

There may be some who will argue the point, but few should find such *recherché* romance on an overstuffed sofa placed on the front porch either. If they do, we certainly hope they are sufficiently away from a streetlight that neighbors and passers-by will not be offended. We do not find much history in moldy, old furniture.

## Sit on it (not!)

The City of A² has labored long over an ordinance controlling the placement of overstuffed furniture on the front porches of residences in that town. Local media refers to the offending—and dangerous—furniture as "couches" knowing full well that similar seating in Saline is called a "davenport" (after one of their founders) and most of the Midwest refers to this multi-seated living room amenity as a "sofa." (Almost nobody says "divan" anymore. And "loveseat?" Let's not go there. Suffice to say it's for two people.) Until A² is able to get in touch with the rest of the culture, they may have to continue rewriting ordinances to keep late-night immolations from occurring in front of their residences.

Perhaps they could demand sprinkler systems to soak down the old sofas in the dry season. Granted, damp and moldy furniture would not look too good and would probably smell really awful, but it's only student rental property; UM students may be accustomed to that kind of abuse.

Watch for still more legislation from Athens of the Midwest on the local level pertaining to overstuffed chairs, abandoned bar stools and hassock/ottoman offenses. Just watch where you sit.

*[A portion of this story appeared on AnnArbor.com when City Council was still debating the arguable "porch couch" issue.]*

## In the next *Rag*:

**In our January/February issue:**
Upstairs down by the depot, second-story stories, high-minded editorials, lofty ideals


# Depot Town Rag

**"All the news that fits, we print"**
A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198
**To the editor:**
thomasdodd@comcast.net


## The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Michelle Shankwiler, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org
**DTA meets** at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

# Oh, rats!

*Professional Australian rat-catchers, 1900*

## Contrasting elements

When Shelly Hutchinson built his mansion on the hill on the east side of Ypsilanti, things were so bad down by the depot that City Hall was offering one dollar for each dead rat brought in. So many rat corpses were collected that a city employee suggested the local bounty hunters just bring in their cut-off tails to be tagged and stored in a filing cabinet in his office. Of course, he referred to this collection as his "rat-tail file."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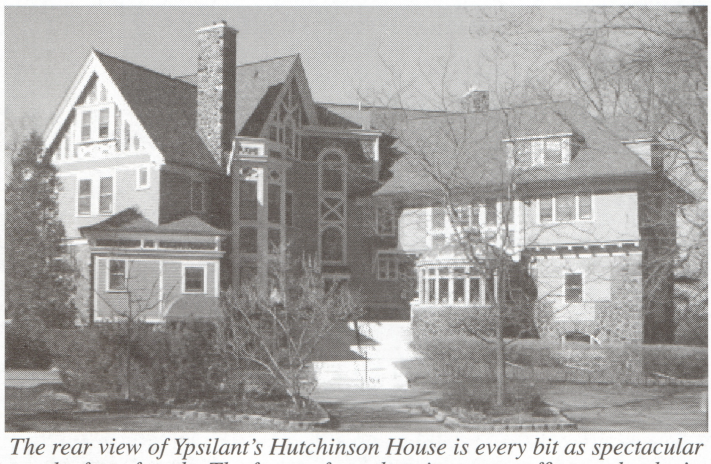
High/Scope Educational Research Foundation is an independent nonprofit research, development, training, and public advocacy organization with headquarters in Ypsilanti, Michigan. High/Scope's mission is to improve the life chances of children and youth by promoting high-quality educational programs.

High/Scope activities include:

- Conducting research projects on the effectiveness of educational programs
- Developing curricula for infant/toddler, preschool, elementary, and adolescent programs
- Training preschool and elementary teachers and administrators
- Conducting an Annual High/Scope International Conference and several High/Scope Regional Training Conferences
- Publishing books, videos, curriculum materials, and assessment tools for educators and researchers
- Operating demonstration preschools in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and at the High/Scope Discovery Center in Gretna, Louisiana, that serve children in the local community and provide a model of "High/Scope in action" for visiting educators
- Operating residential enrichment programs for adolescents at the High/Scope Retreat and Meeting Center in Clinton, Michigan, and at other locations throughout the country



*The rear view of Ypsilant's Hutchinson House is every bit as spectacular as the front façade. The former front door is now an office, and today's traffic arrives from the new steps (center) leading to the main lobby.*

# We used the back door of Ypsi's first "McMansion"

Don't get uppity on us. When Shelly Byron Hutchinson built his edifice complex on the hill overlooking Ypsilanti's depot district, not many of the locals went up the driveway to the front door. We came in the back. Depot Towners were the cooks, porters, house- and grounds-keepers for Hutchinson's short stay in his dream mansion.

Shelly Hutchinson didn't use the front door very long, himself. He lived in his dream house only 10 years.

After several years of abandonment, the house was divided into apartments. In 1975 it was purchased by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation for use as their world headquarters. High/Scope has a preservation architect on staff who oversees the restoration of the house.

The ballroom and musicians' balcony are now offices.

## High/Scope's Mission and Vision

To lift lives through education, the High/Schope Educational Research Foiundation engages in curriculum development, research, training, publishing, and communication. We envision a world in which all educational settings use active, participatory learning so everyone has a chance to succeed in life and contribute to society.

# Historical architectural styles finally identified

There is nothing new under the sun. The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation describes the Hutchinson House at 600 N. River as "an elaborate mix of the Queen Anne, Tudor Revival, and Craftsman styles, all popular at the time, all contributing to an almost ostentatious rampant eclecticism."

Such rambunctious visual display was seen again in the 1990s when architects threw up condos in what they dubbed the "Post Modern" style, picking up their favorite attributes from local historic districts that had carefully preserved examples from the 19th century.

# Without ballrooms, we're dancing in the streets of Depot Town

The "Green Stamp Ballroom" may not be recognizable any more, but fear not; we still have plenty of ballrooms in this old neighborhood:

1. The third-floor Follett House ballroom is where Jenny Lynd and Buffalo Bill performed and Ypsi High played its first basketball game. No heat, lights, or electricty have been installed, and that majestic space is still awating restoration.
2. The Maccabee ballroom, a 50' x 25' space above The Enchanted Florist, is now the district's most spacious apartment.
3. The upstairs ballroom from the former Fraternal Order of Eagles has been divided down the middle and serves as the headquarters of the EMU American Association of University Professors (AAUP).
4. Today's Depot Towners don't need such elaborate spaces for their dancing; they mostly do it in the streets during the popular festivals and cruise nights.

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# It's the economy, readers!

Depot Town keeps on keeping on, even when the national economy goes into the tank. Tenacity seems to be the underlying ethic that keeps these nineteenth century buildings full of enthusiastic clientele. The first wintry day of November saw most of the sidewalk tables disappear from in front of our bars and restaurants and the street looked pretty bleak at first glance—until we opened the doors to all the warm and happy diners crowded around tables and huddled up to the fireplaces.

Still, constant bad news about no progress from a devasting fire more than a year ago puts a damper on our enthusiasm. News stories feature the burned-out Thompson Building and, with lanes still restircted at one of the entries to the neighborhood, business is down. Most managers reported at least a 30% drop in business while the larger obstructions were in place for a whole year. It's not the most welcoming entry to the district and some old regulars came to gawk at the wreckage and then left.

City Council finally agreed to a long-range plan to preserve the historic building, but, as the calendar stretches long into the future, many businesses wonder if they can hang on that long.

Meanwhile, some sponsors of *The Depot Town Rag* are finding it difficult to stretch their funds to include advertising and have sought newer approaches to promoting their services. So it is with *The Rag*; we're looking for other ways to tell the neighborhood's story and still keep the flavor, tradition, and style to which we have been accustomed since 1976. See column at right:


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## *Rag* publication record:

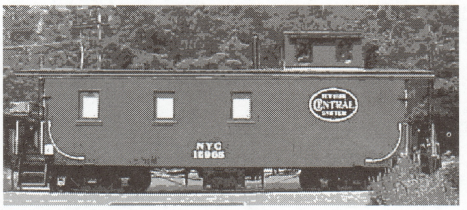
| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Monthly 1976-1996 | = | 120 issues |
| Hiatus 1997-2005 | = | 0 issues |
| Resurgence: 2006-2010 | = | 50 issues |
| **TOTAL:** | | **170 issues** |

*Over 2 million pages of copy distributed*
*Over 71,000 hits on the web site*

*Rag* sponsorships take the form of business-card-size ads of neighborhood businesses. Some change every month; others continue for the entire year. DTA members pay $250 for the year, non-members $300.

Thanks to our many loyal readers, sponsors, proof readers, Standard Printing, delivery persons, and neighborhood storytellers, the stories just keep on coming!

Fiercely loyal and local, *The Depot Town Rag* carries on an old tradition, whether it's with ink on paper or digits in the ether.




# Coming to the end of the line?

Mark Twain's famous line seems appropriate here: tales of our demise are premature. No, it's not terminal, but yes, our publishers are seeking more economical ways to tell the neighborhood's story.

*The Rag* is considering following the tradition seen in the evolution of the *The Ann Arbor News* into *AnnArbor.com*. Our ancient producers wonder if they can make the transition from unfolding a three-page spread across the table to sitting in that same space with a blinking lap-top computer relating the people, places and events of this historic and much-loved place.

"Ancient producers" is not a slight; our proofreader is 80, the editor is 75, the delivery person is 50. Even our webmaster is 65! They find change difficult as they move closer to their plots in Highland Cemetery.

As they examine the possibility of expanding the web site "depottown.org" to a specific domain name ("*DepotTownRag*"), they note that we saw nearly 2000 hard copies of last month's *Rag* picked up in the neighborhood, while our six-year-old web site had more than 71,000 hits.

As sponsors sign up to support *The Rag* in 2011, the January/February issue will retain the in-your-hand tradition of folding paper, but the issue's content will help our loyal readers to make the digital transfer.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